

04/01/2017
The Bible's Greenhouse

Perhaps you figured out from the title that today's quiz is related to plants in the Bible. I hope you are able to cultivate some positive thoughts as you harvest some correct answers.... As always, have fun...

- _____ 1. What kind of plant miraculously sprung up to give shade to Jonah? (a) a gourd, (b) a sycamore, (c) a hibiscus, (d) a fig tree.
- _____ 2. She used mandrakes to lure Jacob to sleep with her for a night. (a) Rachel, (b) Zilpah, (c) Leah, (d) Bilhah.
- _____ 3. He used rods of poplar, almond, (hazel) and chestnut trees (plane) to make "genetic" changes in his sheep. (a) Jacob, (b) Hosea, (c) Amos, (d) Clydeous.
- _____ 4. What kind of tree did a weary Elijah sit under? (a) an oak, (b) a sycamore, (c) a juniper, (broom) (d) it doesn't say.
- _____ 5. This plant had such a bitter taste that it became a symbol for sorrow and disaster. (a) specie of grape, (b) willow, (c) sedge, (d) wormwood.
- _____ 6. In the NT, this tree supposedly had the smallest of seeds.
- _____ 7. This book in the OT mentions both the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley. (a) Psalms, (b) Proverbs, (c) Song of Solomon, (d) Joshua.
- _____ 8. According to the book of Job, this mythological creature eats grass like an ox. (a) Dragon, (b) Behemoth, (c) Seraphim, (d) Widget.
- _____ 9. (a kid's question) What kind of tree did Zacchaeus climb up to see Jesus?
- _____ 10. According to the book of Exodus, manna resembled _____ seed. (a) sesame, (b) caraway, (c) fennel, (d) coriander.

Have a great weekend and an uplifting and glorifying day of worship on His Day.... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/03/2017
A Bad Trade

"What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" (Mk.8:36).

Before free agency made its way into baseball, shrewd general managers would trade players from one team to another in hope of getting the better of the deal. Many times the trades worked out for both teams, but sometimes they were lopsided in favor of just one. In 1965 the Cincinnati Reds traded Frank Robinson to the Baltimore Orioles for a pitcher named Milt Pappas. Robinson led the Orioles to a World Series and became a Hall of Fame player, while

Pappas just had an average career. In 1972, my Philadelphia Phillies traded pitcher Rick Wise to the St. Louis Cardinals for Steve Carlton. Carlton also led the Phillies to a World Series and became a Hall of Famer, while Wise (who I liked) had an otherwise pedestrian career. The Lord asks an important question about trades in today's verse.

Remember, in baseball, trades were supposed to work out well for both sides. The trade that Jesus talks about, if made, would be disastrous... My wife Jane enjoys watching HGTV. Many aspects of the show involve people making monetary investments in properties, in hope of selling them for a profit. Its another "trade game..." In baseball, and the world at large, the value of things tend to fluctuate. The gamble taken in hope of making a profit does not always turn out the way one wants it to.... The trade in today's verse never works out well! It might be interesting to note, that the word soul is translated as life in the KJV of the Bible.... Nothing is really lost in the change. When Jesus is talking about one's soul or life, He's speaking about eternity. One of the big reasons we become Christians is not only about a better life on earth, but that special place we will spend our eternity. As this question echoes down through time to us, we want to see all of its implications....We'll examine some of the complexities of the topic this week....After all, we want to make sure that we don't make a bad trade...

Have a great start to your week.... Begin it with a RAK or two... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/04/2017

Some More Bad Trades

"Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mk.8:37).

What Jesus' question today proves is that a man's soul can be lost... Sin is the destructive power over souls that causes them to be lost, and if it is lost, it is due to a person's bad decision(s). The question literally begs us to consider the dangers of making bad trades. "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both the body and soul in hell" (Matt.10:46). Jesus made this teaching a firm one because of all the bad trades that are available out there. Lets take a look at a few of those trades. Some folks get so wrapped up in the everyday cares of life, that they become like Martha, who was "worried and upset about many things," (Lk.10:41) when she had Jesus in her home. Each day, we must be like Mary, "who has chosen what is better." (Vs.42). We cannot withdraw from the world, but we should make no mistake that bad associations can corrupt our morals. If we run with the goats, there's not enough deodorant and soap out there to get rid of the smell... When we allow ourselves to be pulled away from the sound doctrine of God's inspired Word, there is a bad trade brewing. "They worship Me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men" (Matt.15:8). As we mentioned earlier, sin is always lurking around the corner. Because there are so many sinners, sin must be personally and temporarily enjoyable... Moses is in faith's Hall of Fame because of this; "He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season..." (Heb.11:25). Exchanging our soul for a sinful life is a bad trade. Finally, there's that life of ease thing. We can never get rich enough, mature enough or comfortable enough to stop serving the Lord. There is no time to sit back and see what a good boy or girl we have been. It takes a lot of effort to serve God, and if we do not, there's a bad trade waiting to happen. Lets be sure to keep our eyes on the prize, and not trade anything for the living of a spiritual life that will save our souls...

Have a wonderful day.... Do good and give God the credit... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/05/2017

A Wise Trader

"Do not be deceived. God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will receive eternal life" (Gal.6:7-8).

The question Jesus asked about what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul still resonates with us today. It would seem that its a rhetorical question involving what someone would give in trade for eternal life. Yesterday we looked at some bad trades and today will be related. In trades, a person gives one thing up in exchange for another. The bartering system has been with us forever, as man has traded goods for goods, or goods for money. There is actually no escape from such exchanges as we gain one thing at the loss of something else. Here's the deal.... We just don't get to have everything! If I want to have a Milky Way candy bar, I must plop the proper amount of money on the counter to purchase it. The clerk won't give it to me because I'm such a cool guy, so to experience the pleasure of eating that wonderful sweet snack, I must give up about a dollar. The lesson? Jesus' question powerfully teaches that man cannot have everything. As we see in today's verses, one cannot sow to his or her sinful nature and expect to reap eternal life. The psalmist figured it out in the 1st Psalm... "Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous." (Vs.4-5) To cap it off... "For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish" (Vs.6). As we take a look at my title today, just what constitutes a wise trader... Lets go to God's Word and look at one of Jesus' short parables... "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field.

When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field" (Matt.13:44-45). The wise trader is one who gives up everything for the kingdom. Lets all be wise traders...

Have a great day... Make your little part of the world better... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/06/2017

Bad Trade...Tragic Loss

"Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands..." (II Cor.5:1).

There are plenty of losses in life that are bad enough. We would all like to have perfect health, financial security and relationships that are all wonderful. If we posed Jesus' question about what one would give in exchange for his soul in different terms, how tragic would it be. "What would it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but is not as healthy as he would like to be?" "What would it profit a man if he gains the whole world but isn't as financially secure as he hoped to be?" How about if we could not afford the best foods or drive the best car? And what if all of our interpersonal relationships were not humming along smoothly? All of these things can be inconvenient or uncomfortable, but they are not tragic... The loss of one's soul is a million times worse! The loss of the soul is tragic on two fronts. First, it entails the loss of many blessings here on earth, but it also means the loss of heaven... That is tragic! After the Ethiopian was baptized by Philip, it says this; "but he went away rejoicing..." (Acts 8:39). A loss of the soul means the forfeiture of life's greatest happiness, the loss of the most beautiful influence, the loss of fellowship with fellow Christians and the privilege of Christ-likeness... For such losses there is no compensation. Today's verse speaks about that eternal home that is prepared for those who follow Him. I love Solomon's words in Eccl.12:7; "And the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." Is there a bottom line for all of this? I think there is... That which is our most treasured possession, our soul, endures forever. There is absolutely nothing on earth that is worth trading it for...Have a great day... Let His light shine through you... Love mark Phil.4:11

Have a great day... Let His light shine through you... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/07/2017
The Real Stuff

"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (II Cor.4:18).

Some of the most important stuff in our lives cannot be seen or handled. In a world where "stuff" is really important, we find this wonderful nugget (II Cor.4:18) of information. Many things that cannot be seen, touched, heard or smelled are extremely influential in our lives. Love, joy, pain, sorrow, kindness, patience and loveliness are among them.... The fact that our souls do not meet the see, hear, smell and touch test in no way alters their importance. Something that all of these things have in common is that even though they are not physically real, we can ascertain their presence. The spirit dwelling within each of us, though not physically tangible, guides us all day long... As we conclude that series of devotionals about the soul, we would find it foolish not to understand the reality of things unseen. Although the fruit of the Spirit listed for us in Gal.5:22-23, are not see, hear, smell or touch things, they are the most important qualities that a person can have. Using my title today, that makes them the real stuff... They are the fuel that drives our engines. Doing good, serving the Lord, visiting the sick, praying for those with problems and encouraging those that need to be encouraged are all outward manifestations of invisible things. These invisible things are just as real as what they do. There are three inscriptions and three symbols over the three doors of the Milan Cathedral. Over the left door are roses with the inscription, that which pleases for but for a moment... Over the right door are thorns with the inscription, that which troubles but for a moment... Over the middle door is a cross with the inscription, that alone is important which endures forever.... HOW TRUE! Lets be sure to understand that this is the real stuff...

Have a great day... T G I F Thank God I'm Forgiven.... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/08/2017

More Plants

This week's quiz will again deal with plant life in the Bible. Try to root out all the answers, but don't get green with envy if you can't get some of them right...

- _____ 1. This vine is mentioned in the OT as bearing poisonous berries. (a) vine of Sodom, (b) vine of evil, (c) vine of Ai, (d) vine of the Moabites.
- _____ 2. Jesus says this weed will be separated from the wheat at judgement. (a) nestles, (b) thistles, (c) tares, (d) stinkweed.
- _____ 3. What kind of wood was the ark of the covenant made of? (a) oak, (b) cedar, (c) teak, (d) acacia.
- _____ 4. What prophet was a "dresser of sycamore trees?" (a) Joel, (b) Amos, (c) Obadiah, (d) Micah.
- _____ 5. What kind of trees did the exiled Jews hang their harps on? (a) oaks, (b) willows, (c) cedars, (d) sycamores.
- _____ 6. What defeated king was buried with his sons under an oak tree? (a) Hezekiah, (b) Josiah, (c) Jeroboam, (d) Saul.

_____ 7. Jesus said if your faith is as big as a mustard seed, this kind of tree can be uprooted. (a) mulberry, (b) oak, (c) sycamore, (d) there's no such tree.

_____ 8. This OT city was called "the city of palms." (a) Ephraim, (b) Jericho, (c) Jerusalem, (d) Gotham.

_____ 9. Jesus compared this king to lilies of the field. (a) Hezekiah, (b) Josiah, (c) Solomon, (d) Clydeous.

_____ 10. This OT man met the Lord at the oaks of Mamre. (a) Abraham, (b) Jacob, (c) Moses, (d) Joshua.

Have a wonderful weekend and an uplifting and glorious day of worship on His day.... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/10/2017

Jesus' Death And Resurrection

"How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter glory?" (Lk.24:25-26)..

Today's verses take place after Jesus died and was resurrected. The disciples were of course saddened by the death of Jesus. I find it interesting that Jesus calls them foolish...Why? Maybe its because even though they knew the prophetic writings, they failed to understand that Christ's suffering was His path to glory. Maybe its because they could not understand why God did not intervene to save Jesus from the agony of the cross... In this week that the world looks to this coming Sunday as Easter, I thought we might take a look at the reason(s) that Jesus had to die for us. God's honor and man's happiness required that God govern man whom He had created. The means to securing voluntary obedience was to make the rewards great and the penalties severe. Both in Old and New Testament days, man had rebelled against God's law and brought death into the world. God had to do Himself the honor of enforcing His laws. Sin, at the demand of justice, had to be punished. "The soul who sins is the one who will die" (Ezek.18:20). "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom.5:23). The wonderful part of this story is the love of God... God loved man and desired his salvation so badly that He gave His Son. Why? "He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (II Pet.3:9). Love cried for man's liberation, while justice demanded his punishment. The only way for both of these demands to be met was solved by Jesus death and subsequent resurrection. He was the propitiation for our sins. I'll close with a story from the Medes and Persians that illustrates this; Their laws demanded an "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." A young man had put out the eyes of another and the law demanded that his eyes be destroyed. When he came to trial, his own father was the judge... There were conflicting thoughts of justice and mercy in the father's heart, but laws must be upheld...That being said, love can find a way to show mercy. "As the judge, my son, I must assess the penalty of the law. Two eyes must be given for the two you have taken; but as you father, I offer one of mine to help meet the demands of justice." God offered Jesus... More tomorrow

Have a great start to your week.... Begin it with a RAK or two... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/11/2017
The Price Paid

"Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?" (Lk.24:26). "He Himself bore our sins in His

body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live righteously; by His wounds you have been healed" (I Pet.2:24).

The scriptures clearly tell us that in Christ's death He paid the price for sin and offered to man a way to escape. The apostle Peter says it in today's verse, and Paul states it this way; "Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures"

(I Cor.15:3). "In whom we have we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph.1:7). In this plan, God's law was honored and man was redeemed. Here's the real deal... Only Christ could qualify as man's redeemer. For man to be redeemed, the substitute for guilty man (that's us) must be as sinless and noble as man was before he first sinned... For a while, a sacrificed animal would do, but it was not valuable enough to be a redeemer. At best, the offering of an animal was but a faint acknowledgment of a huge debt ---- "but those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb.10:3). Adam was a representative of the whole human race, and so was Christ. Adam's rebellion was voluntary. He chose while he had unimpaired use of all his faculties. Likewise, the obedience of Christ was voluntary, with unimpaired faculties. "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have the authority to lay it down and the authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father" (Jn.10:17-18).

A redeemer must be the rightful owner of the price he gives. Jesus was the only son of man who owned his life independently. He had life in Himself, even as the Father. It was necessary for Jesus to die for us, and we all know the reason why.... More tomorrow...

Have a wonderful day.... Do good and give God the credit.... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/12/2017

The Enormity Of Sin

"Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter glory?" (Lk.24:26) "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (I Jn.1:8).

As we continue to look at why Jesus had to die and then be resurrected, the real reason comes to the front... Wisdom required that God portray the enormity of sin. Any lesser sacrifice would not have pictured the magnitude of it. Christ's death is the supreme effort of God to portray to man sin in its true nature and His hatred toward it... "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed" (I Pet.2:24). I guess that sin may not seem so bad to man, because he lives so close to it. "But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness" (Heb.3:13). This verse from the book of Hebrews points out that we shouldn't be sucked into the false pretense and alluring nature of sin...From the very beginning God has viewed sin differently, and today's verse from I John lets us know succinctly that if we claim to be without it that we deceive ourselves... So the cross pictures sin in its true light, at its worst, for it alone could reconcile a sinful race back to a sinless God. Finally, Christ's death for sin is the most profound expression of divine love the world has ever known. The idea of the Divine One coming to us in human flesh and taking upon Himself the burden of sin never would have entered into a human plan for reconciliation... And yet, this glorious truth is forcefully brought to our hearts in Christ's life, death and ultimate resurrection... The sorrows unfolded in Gethsemane and the severe suffering on the cross, picture to us an infinite compassion which ought to stir our hearts. We'll finish these thoughts tomorrow..

Have a great day... Make your little part of the world better.... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/13/2017

Love And Hope

"Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter glory?" (Lk.24:26) "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this; While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom.5:8).

As we complete this series which was a response to Jesus' question in Lk.24:26, we reach a watershed.... In the education circles, we like to call this a teaching moment... Maybe even two teaching moments. Lets remember that these words from Jesus were spoken after His death, burial and resurrection, so they become even more poignant. There is another truth here which Christ's suffering and death preach to the world ---- vis., the worth and grandeur of man. God's ultimate provisions for human salvation testify to the high value of man's soul, thus today's second scripture. It is awesome just to contemplate that God sent Jesus to us at precisely the right time.... Why? Paul writes that He did it to demonstrate His own love for us... Why? While we were sinners, Christ died for us. We needed the ultimate sacrifice and Jesus provided it. We have been bought with the world's greatest price. The words of Psalm 8:4-5 ought to take on special meaning to us... "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.... In our second teachable moment, we find this gem. Our Savior's death gave hope to man because Jesus came forth from it. Death and resurrection belong together; there needs be one if there would be the other. Jesus said this; "Because I live, you will also live" (Jn.14:19). All that we read this week proves that the necessity of Christ's death is reasonable and understandable. God did this because He loves us and desires to give us hope.

Have a great day.... Let His light shine through you... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/14/2017

Through Daniel, God Talks About The Messiah

"Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey Him" (Dan.7:27).

The second part of the book of Daniel, after the lion's den and the fiery furnace, revolves around visions that he had. The visions of the four beasts in chapter 7, reinforces the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. It was about the earthly kingdoms that would follow Babylon, ending up with the spiritual kingdom ushered in by Jesus... During the course of His self-revelation, God, at times, miraculously uncovered the future. He did this as we see in today's verse. God foretold judgement on Israel. He described ahead about the return of the nation from Babylonian captivity. Still,

God foretold of no other event so persistently as the coming of the Savior... The Christ would establish a New Covenant. "The time coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt.... I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts..." (Jer.31:31-33). He would write His law on Israel's heart, and on ours... The night visions that Daniel had were a part of God's revelation of a coming Savior. I find it unfortunate when religious people want to mine Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah or even Revelation for descriptions of a rapture or 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth.... For those who specialize in the explaining of mysteries, these are the places to go... One can read whatever he or she wishes into visions and apocalypses. The problem is that those who specialize in mysteries often overlook the key elements of God's message. I find great reassurance in the Messianic prophesies in these books. They supplement my belief in Jesus as our Wonderful

Savior, and as we think of the resurrection this week, we should be incredibly happy that God's plan has been fulfilled in Him....

Have a great day... T G I F Today God Is First.... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/15/2017
Easter Sunday Quiz

The first day of Jesus' resurrection was a busy one. Fill in the blanks about the resurrection day with the proper persons. As always, have fun

1. _____, _____ and _____ were the 1st to visit the tomb on resurrection day.
2. _____ rolled back the stone and sat on it.
3. _____ told the 2 Marys to tell the disciples to go back to Galilee where they would see Jesus.
4. _____ were given money to say that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body.
5. Jesus found _____ in the garden crying.
6. _____ ran to the sepulcher to see if women had told the truth about Jesus being alive.
7. _____ outran Peter to the sepulcher.
8. _____ mistook Jesus for the gardener.
9. _____ and another person walked with Jesus but did not know Him.
10. Jesus found the frightened _____ in an upper room.
11. _____ said unless he could see and touch Jesus wounds, he wouldn't believe the news of the resurrection.

Answers: (an answer may be used more than once) Mary Magdalene, Thomas, Salome, Jesus, Peter, John, Soldiers, Mary, Disciples, Cleopas, the angel of the Lord.

Have a great weekend and an uplifting and glorifying day of worship on His day.... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/17/2017

Salvation Made Simple

"The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He brought them out and asked, 'Sirs, What must I do to be saved?' " (Acts 16: 29-30).

The question asked by the jailer in the city of Philippi, is one that has been asked many, many times for two centuries. You might want to read the entire story to get the full effect. This week, I want to do a series of devotionals about salvation. In our Bibles, this is not the only time that this same question has been asked, and we'll look at a few others. To gain one's salvation is to become a Christian, so we can see the extreme importance of the question and its answer. I would like to start this study by parsing the question so that we do not miss a thing...

- (1) "What." This suggests that there is something required of a person to be saved.
- (2) "Must." This eliminates options from the matter... It is an absolute necessity.
- (3) "I." This denotes the individual responsibility in human redemption. God has done His part.
- (4) "Do." This suggests activity on the part of a person in being saved.
- (5) "To be saved." This is the object sought by the person asking it. The saving is done by another. But what must a person actually do to be saved by the Savior?

Lets take a look at how we should precede to answer the question. First of all, lets eliminate feelings, opinions or prejudice from the mix... These tend to vary with different people, and may cloud the issue rather than make it clear... Since this is a Spiritually inspired question, we must go to the Spiritually inspired Bible and read the question each time it is found, together with its answer. This would be scriptural and correct beyond question, and furthermore, it would present the whole truth on it. The question is found, substantially, only four times in the New Testament, and one of these was while the law of Moses was in effect. I hope you will enjoy this study and be enriched and encouraged by it. I'll give you a hint to tomorrow's devotional. You will need to read Mk.10:17 to get it. Let me know what you think...

Have a great start to your week.... Begin it with a RAK or two.... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/18/2017

Salvation Before And After The New Testament

"As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to Him and fell on his knees before Him. 'Good teacher,' he asked, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' " (Mk.10:17).

When the man we have come to know as "The Rich Young Man," asked Jesus what he could do to inherit eternal life, Jesus said the only thing He could. Since He had not yet died and resurrected, the Mosaic Law was still in effect...

Jesus referred him back to the Ten Commandments. The young man said all these I have kept since I was a boy (Vs.20). Jesus then commanded him to "sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me" (Vs.21). This answer would not be given today, because it was before the New Testament came into effect.. "For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance...." "Because a will is in force only when someone has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living" (Heb.9:15 &17). Jesus had not died yet so His answer to the rich young man would certainly not be given today. On the Day of Pentecost, 50 days after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the question is asked again as a result of Peter's sermon... Peter's answer to what must we do to be saved, is a

different one than Jesus'. He said this; "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins..." (Acts 2:37). According to the answer, baptism is just as essential as repentance. At this point in their lives, they were told about Jesus and what He had done. The next step toward salvation is explained by the apostle Peter and is the same answer that is given to perspective Christians today... We'll look at Saul's (Paul's) conversion tomorrow

Have a great day... Do good and give God the credit... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/19/2017

The Questions From Saul And The Philippian Jailer

"What shall I do, Lord? I asked." (Acts 22:10).... "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30).

Two questions are asked in regard to salvation by two different men from the Book of Acts in today's verses. The 1st was asked by Saul (Paul) after he saw the Lord on the way to Damascus and the 2nd by the Philippian jailer after an earthquake opened the prison doors. Paul is introduced to us as a persecutor of Christians. His conscience didn't hurt him in doing this because he thought he was doing the right thing. Jesus appeared to Paul to ultimately qualify him for apostleship, but rather than tell him what to do to be saved, He sent him to Ananias. Ananias witnessed to him and then answered the question in Acts 22:16... "And now what are you waiting for? Get up and be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on His name." It certainly appears here that baptism stands between a penitent believer and the washing away of his sins. The Philippian jailer, on the other hand, was an unbeliever from the start who was alarmed by the earthquake and its results. There is little evidence that he had ever heard a gospel sermon about Jesus.... So, what is the answer given to this unbeliever? "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." But the story does not end here. They preached to him so that he might believe. (Rom.10:17) The jailer then repented... "At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and his whole family were baptized.... he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God ---- he and his whole family... (16:33-34).

Baptism accompanied repentance and belief in both of these cases, as each of these men came to salvation.

Tomorrow, we will review all of this and hopefully come to the correct conclusion....

Have a wonderful day.... Make your little part of the world better.... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/20/2017

The Distance To Seattle

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30).

Lets say that I have decided to embark on a journey to Seattle, Washington by car. I have found that the direct route to Seattle is about 2,900 miles from here in New Jersey... On the 1st day, I traveled 700 miles, so we can all do the math. If I travel a specific distance each day, the distance to Seattle gets shorter and shorter. Seattle hasn't changed positions, but I am in a different stage of the journey each day. We have seen three different queries over the past three days about the journey to salvation. The crowd on the Day of Pentecost, Paul and the Philippian jailer wanted to go to the same place, so they asked how to get there. We have three different answers to the same question... Why?

I believe that the explanation is easy... The folks on Pentecost did believe; so they were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins... Paul, on the other hand was a penitent believer; so he was told only to be baptized and wash away his sins. The Philippian jailer was an unbeliever; so he was told to believe. They preached

to him to develop faith and then he repented and was baptized. They were given different answers because they were at different stages on their journey to salvation... Just as different answers are given each day on an earthly journey to Seattle are to be expected, the same is true for the spiritual journey to salvation. It is just as understandable, why three different answers were given to the question, "what must I do to be saved?" All of the three did the same things and traveled over the same road. All were converted alike, as our Bible does not contradict itself... After conversion, a new journey begins... Enjoy the ride...

Have a great day... Let His light shine through you... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/21/2017

The Struggles Of A Prophet Are Ours

"Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?" (Jer.12:1).

Perhaps no prophet was as conflicted, as indignant at sin, or as dissatisfied with God's response as was Jeremiah. Do today's verses still ring true with folks today? Though Jesus talked about the rain falling on the just and unjust, is that enough for us? Christians are apt to see themselves in Jeremiah in more than his questioning of the justice of God... The prophet, perhaps was a little too quick to call down God's wrath, as he wrote this; "Drag them off like sheep to be butchered! Set them apart for the day of slaughter." I find it interesting that God gave Jeremiah a heaping dose of reality... "If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses?

If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan..." (Vs,5). Like many of us, Jeremiah's faith and devotion in the pursuits God had given to him had waxed and waned. As we might do, sometimes Jeremiah complained, while at other times he bowed down and confessed and hoped. For those who want their religion to be all sunshine, lollipops and unicorns, the book of Jeremiah might not be to their liking. He was given the task of confronting sin which he did unwaveringly. As a reward, he was often ridiculed as a laughingstock, and considered a pest. A lesson for us here is an important one. We cannot run ahead of God! Though we live in a sinful world, and sinfulness seems to be winning the day, despair should not be in our vocabulary... The apostle Paul lived in a world held within the grips of sin too. His response? "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Rom.8:37). This sounds like Paul thought he was winning...Sin is wrong and ought to be denounced, but we do well to allow God to work on His own schedule...

Have a great day... T G I F Thank God I'm Forgiven.... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/22/2017

Questions From The Bible Greenhouse

This morning's questions will deal again with plants found in the Bible. Lets hope that your knowledge in this field is well rooted.... As always, have fun....

_____ 1. Moses saw the burning bush in this land. (a) Goshen, (b) Moab, (c) Midian, (d) it doesn't say.

_____ 2. God made plants on this day of creation. (a) 1st, (b) 2nd, (c) 3rd, (d) 4th.

_____ 3. Solomon's chariots were made of this kind of wood. (a) cedar, (b) oak, (c) pine, (d) wormwood.

- _____ 4. This book of the Bible mentions "apples of gold." (a) Psalms, (b) Proverbs, (c) Ecclesiastes, (d) Song Of Solomon.
- _____ 5. In the parable of the sower, these plants caused some seeds to die. (a) tares, (b) existing wheat, (c) weeds, (d) thorns.
- _____ 6. The capitals on the temple columns were shaped like this flower. (a) hibiscus, (b) lily, (c) violet, (d) rose.
- _____ 7. What tree's fruit was symbolically represented on the clothing of the high priest? (a) plum, (b) apple, (c) fig, (d) pomegranate.
- _____ 8. This wood was used to make the table in the tabernacle for holding the sacred bread. (a) cedar, (b) acacia, (c) oak, (d) gopher.

TRUE OR FALSE

- _____ 9. According to the gospel of Luke, the Pharisees tithed a tenth of the herbs mint and rue.
- _____ 10. In speaking of the Messiah, the prophet Isaiah said, "a bruised reed he will not break."

Have a great weekend and a glorifying and uplifting day of worship on His day.... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/24/2017

What To Do With Jesus

"Pilate said to them, 'Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?' " (Matt.27:22).

In today's verse, Jesus is standing before Pilate, the Roman governor, after being interrogated by Him. Pilate asked the question while sitting on the judgement seat in front of the people. His wife had sent a rather ominous message to him, telling him to have nothing to do with that righteous Man, because of a dream she had that night. He did have some choices. If someone would ask us the same question today, what shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ, we would have choices too. Pilate's choice placed the ruler in a fearful dilemma. It was a perilous responsibility to face, and one that Pilate sought to escape. He was conscious of the innocence of Jesus, but there were weightier influences pulling against his releasing Him... It was natural for Pilate to seek the good will and popularity of his subjects, as a religious frenzy had swept the multitudes off balance. The excited mob cried for His blood. He tried to play the innocent martyr by washing his hands of the matter, but in the end, he had Jesus flogged and handed Him over to be crucified.... 2,000 years ago, this was a political question when asked by Pilate, but today is a moral and living question that must be answered daily. This week, we will try to look at this question that still agitates the world today as it did Pilate and the mob when it was initially asked. Christ was born, lived, taught, and died. The issue is clear-cut... We must either confess Him with all of its glorious rewards, or deny Him with all its terrible consequences... Christ cannot be compromised, as in every religious and moral action, His teachings loom before us. Regardless of the circumstances, the question rings out clearly everyday in one form or another....

Have a great start to your week.... Begin it with a RAK or two.... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/25/2017

What To Do About Jesus... A Personal Question

"Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?" (Matt.27:22).

When Pilate asked the question in today's verse, it was just a bit personal, but mostly political. When the same question is asked today, it is a totally a personal one. Each person is responsible for his or her own decision and conduct... "For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (II Cor.5:10). No person can wash himself of this responsibility; In reality, not even Pilate could... The question asked by Pilate is one that has been looked at from every conceivable direction. As "the Son of Man" is one of them. That Jesus was the son of man is not disputed, as He actually posed that question to His disciples in Matt.16:13... "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" How about the viewing of Jesus as a historical character? Of earth's unnumbered billions, only a few are really historic... Of those few, none has influenced the world as Jesus has. No other ruler has ruled so long nor had so many loyal subjects. The words of the once powerful Napoleon (1769-1821) pay a noble tribute to Jesus; "But can you conceive of a dead man making conquests, with an army faithful and entirely devoted to His memory? My armies have forgotten me, even while living, as the Carthaginian army forgot Hannibal. Such is our power! A single battle lost crushes us, and adversity scatters our friends. Can you remember Caesar as the Emperor of the Roman senate, and from the depths of a mausoleum governing the empire, watching over the destinies of Rome? Such is the history of the world by the invasion of Christianity. Such is the power of the God of the Christians. Nations pass away, thrones crumble, but the church remains. Christ speaks, and at once generations become His by stricter, closer ties than those of blood. He lights up flames of a love which condemns self-love, which prevails over every other love." WOW! Jesus is the only Son of Man and the only historical figure that still is!.... We serve an amazing Savior... One that has been amazing for 2,000 years and counting. He was amazing yesterday, and will be amazing tomorrow... More about what to do with Jesus tomorrow....

Have a wonderful day... Do good and give God the credit.... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/26/2017

Jesus; Teacher, Moralist, Son Of God

"What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Christ?" (Matt.27:22).

In the answering of this question posed by Pilate as he faced both Jesus and the angry mob of Jews, we come to three aspects of Jesus' life we must face. Jesus was certainly a multi-faceted person, and these three parts of Him shout out to us to answer the question. First, Jesus was a teacher. Let me amplify on that... He wasn't "just" a teacher, but He was the Master Teacher of all time. Modern pedagogy rests upon the foundation laid down by the Master, as he used all methods of teaching... Some of these methods were: illustrations like the vine and the branches of Jn.15:1-6, repetition like repent or perish in Lk.13:3-5, questions like the uselessness or worry in Matt.6:27, conversational mode like with the Samaritan woman by the well in Jn.4:5-26.... 2,000 years have not come close to putting the slightest dent in His religious thoughts and teachings, as there will never be His equal. What do we do with this Jesus who is called the Christ? Second, Jesus possessed a superior moral code. Often he contrasted His higher standard of morality with the lower standard of Judaism. Jesus' morality takes hold of the lives of people, renovates them, and makes them new creatures. He hampers the way of every wrong and facilitates the way of every right. What do we do with this Jesus who is called the Christ? Third, and most importantly, He is the Son

of God! He was the only begotten Son of God and as divine as His Father. This is both the figurative and literal line drawn in the sand, and the advocates (us) of the divine Sonship of Christ are strengthened by every form of evidence... What do we do with this Jesus who is called the Christ? Jesus was all these things and the question must be answered by all human beings. He has done everything to earn our love, honor and respect, so it is up to us to answer the question....

Have a wonderful day.... Make your little part of the world better.... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/27/2017

Different Answers About What To Do With Jesus

"What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Christ?" (Matt.27:22).

From the day the question was asked until today, it has been answered in various ways. On that very day, the mob answered, "Crucify Him!" (Vs.22b). The writer of the Book of Hebrews says that those who fall away crucify Him all over again... (6:6). Pilate answered by indicating a desire to be neutral, (Vs.24) but there can be no neutrality when one considers what they'll do about Jesus. The soldiers answered by mocking and abusing Jesus. Today, Jesus considers it a personal affront when His disciples are harmed. The false witnesses of the day answered by misrepresenting who Jesus was, just as there are those who misrepresent Him today... Three times, Peter answered by denying that he even knew Jesus. The denials of the Master come in many forms today... Judas answered with a kiss of betrayal. Not all who have figuratively kissed Him have loved Him, and because of deceit what could have been the whitest turned into the darkest. Felix, the Roman procurator who reasoned with the apostle Paul, answered with these words of postponement; "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you" (Acts 24:25). There is never a more convenient time to consider what we really think about Jesus. Waiting for the "right time" may be waiting too long. Finally, Paul answered the question this way; "But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ..." (Phil.3:7). Paul knew what he had to do with Jesus who is called the Christ... He knew that his answer determined his eternity. The great question asked by Pilate is ours today, but will be reversed tomorrow... Today, we decide what we must do with Jesus and whether to let Him in when He knocks... Some day, however, we shall stand before Christ and heaven's gate, knocking for admission... Then He will decide what to do with us. Our decision today will determine His tomorrow....

Have a great day... Let His light shine through you.... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/28/2017

The Cup

"Whoever gives a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple ----- truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward" (Matt.10:42).

The term cup in the Bible most often refers to a literal drinking cup, as we see in today's verse... They varied from ordinary pottery cups to the cups of gold used by the very rich. In early days, rich people had their own version of bodyguards called cupbearers, who tasted the contents of cups to see that their masters were not being poisoned. In another variation, reservoirs were used to collect water for the sheep and other animals to drink from, hence the term, "My cup overflows" from Psalm 23:5... The Passover in Jesus' time included drinking wine from cups. At what

like we call The Last Supper, Jesus identified the cup and that its contents were the new covenant in my blood, so that drinking from the cup proclaims His death (I Cor.11:25-28). In Luke's version of The Last Supper, the cup also refers to its contents: "He then took the cup, and after giving thanks He said, 'take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes' " (22:17-18). I am told that four cups were a part of the Passover meal, and the one for which Jesus gave thanks was known as "the cup of blessing" (I Cor.10:16). The very common practice of drinking from a cup led to many rich figurative uses of the word, as it could be filled with many different things... So the use of the term cup could refer to one's possessions or portion. God actually said through the prophet Ezekiel that Judah would drink the cup of her sister Samaria, "a cup of horror and desolation..." (3:31-34). Jesus used the image of the cup when, in referring to His death, He said to James and John, "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Mk.10:38). Finally, Jesus, in His death, drank the cup of God's wrath against sin... "I lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord" (Psa.116:13). Jesus drank the cup of suffering so that we might drink the cup of salvation...

Have a great day... T G I F Thank God I'm Forgiven.... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/29/2017

Blowin' In the Wind

This morning's quiz is all about how the wind blew at different times in the Bible... Needless to say, I know you can find the answer my friend.... As always, have fun...

- _____ 1. What OT book speaks of life as a "chasing after the wind?" (a) Psalms, (b) Proverbs, (c) Ecclesiastes, (d) Song of Solomon.
- _____ 2. Where were the disciples when they heard a sound like "the blowing of a violent wind from heaven?" (a) Bethany, (b) Damascus, (c) Jerusalem, (d) Oz.
- _____ 3. He had a dream of 7 heads of grain sprouted ---- "thin and scorched by the east wind." (a) Nebuchadnezzar, (b) Belshazzar, (c) Darius, (d) Pharaoh.
- _____ 4. What loathsome creatures did God blow into Egypt with an east wind? (a) frogs, (b) locusts, (c) gnats, (d) tsetse flies.
- _____ 5. This prophet was told to cut off his hair and scatter 1/3 of it to the wind? (a) Ezekiel, (b) Ezra, (c) Obadiah, (d) Zechariah.
- _____ 6. How long did the east wind last that parted the Red Sea? (a) one hour, (b) 5 hours, (c) all night long, (d) two days.
- _____ 7. According to James, what kind of person is like a wave of the sea blown and tossed by the wind? (a) a gossip, (b) a dummy, (c) a doubter, (d) I made this up.
- _____ 8. In I Kings, this prophet experienced a great and powerful wind that tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks. (a) Samuel, (b) Elijah, (c) Eli, (d) Clydeous.
- _____ 9. His kids were killed at a feast when a mighty wind swept in from the desert? (a) Pharaoh, (b) Job, (c) Elijah, (d) Lot.

_____ 10. According to the book of Job, what directional wind will eventually strike down the wicked? (a) north, (b) south, (c) east, (d) west.

Have a wonderful weekend and a glorifying and uplifting day of worship on His day.... Love mark Phil.4:11